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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: June 18, 2008

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EEA Announces Land Mapping Assistance for Conservation Commissions and Non-profit Land Trusts *Free Geographic Information System software helps local officials guide local land use and conservation*

BOSTON – The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is extending a popular in-kind grants program that helps municipal conservation commissions and land trusts obtain free computer mapping software, training and digital maps to guide local land use decisions, EEA Secretary Ian Bowles announced today.

The Massachusetts Conservation Mapping Assistance Partnership Program (MACMAPP), a partnership between EEA's MassGIS Office and the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), has provided valuable GIS technology and training to more than 50 conservation commissions and more than 20 non-profit land trusts across the state since its inception two years ago. Valued at \$3,000 each, the geographic information systems (GIS) software, training and support packages awarded through MACMAPP are a benefit many small towns and non-profit groups could not otherwise afford.

“Through this program, municipalities and land conservation groups with limited budgets and little or no experience with computer mapping can start using innovative GIS technology at minimal cost,” Secretary Bowles said. “Using GIS software, conservation commissions can develop computerized maps of their open space inventories and plans, locate wetlands, and map trails and recreational assets – helping to delineate areas that are priorities for conservation.”

Under the program, ESRI provides software, technical support and online training courses, while MassGIS provides map data, a comprehensive two-day hands-on training course, and ongoing support. Grant recipients are required to share all GIS data they develop through the program with MassGIS.

“As a conservation agent, I use GIS nearly every day to locate vernal pools, check for illegal wetland alterations, map the town's storm drain system, determine parcel ownership, compile

abutters lists and much more,” said Ashland Conservation Agent Matt Selby, a MACMAPP grant recipient . “I consider GIS an indispensable tool for this line of work.”

Non-profit land trusts use the software to map existing holdings and to plan strategically for future land protection initiatives.

“The GIS software our program received via the MACMAPP grant is a powerful resource for Corps members who serve the 15 towns in Barnstable County,” said AmeriCorps on Cape Cod Program Coordinator Mary Lawrence. “Members have been able to map trails and open space, track invasive plant species, and support a number of other service projects on Cape Cod. These projects would not have been successful without access to our GIS software.”

Those eligible for MACMAPP grants include municipal conservation commissions and non-profit organizations with a conservation mission. For more information on the program and to apply, go to <http://www.mass.gov/mgis/macmapp.htm>.

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